

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Red Capped Robins in Kelmscott –
On 14 May 1998 I saw a pair (male and female) of Red-capped Robins (*Petroica goodenovii*) at the rear of Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital, close to Salter road, Kelmscott. They were in a patch of open woodland dominated by scarp wandoo (*Eucalyptus laeliae*) that had been burnt about six months previously. The weather that day was fine and mild with bright sunshine, and I saw them at about 1 p.m.

The birds were surprisingly close to a road and residential properties, although this area is the tail end of an extensive tract of more or less contiguous bush that stretches down from the Darling Scarp. The observation may be related to another one from about two years ago when I saw a single male Red-capped Robin about 2 kilometres due east, on the high scarp, in a semi-cleared area near Canns Road, close to the TV transmission tower.

– MIKE GREEN, 21 Contour Road, Roleystone 6111.

“Teaching” or “teasing”?—indirect feeding of food-begging birds by an adult butcherbird and sittella – On 12 September 1997, WED heard the harsh, repetitive, food-begging call of an adult Grey Butcherbird (*Cracticus torquatus*). The male was nearby, and had in his beak a 3 cm insect. The female joined the male and continued to utter the food-begging calls while fluttering her wings in a fashion typical of a food-begging young bird. The

male, perched about 0.7 m above the begging female, wedged the food item in the fork of a small branch, and then flew off. The female climbed to the fork and removed the cached food and ate it. On 18 September WED watched the same pair again involved in courship feeding. On this occasion the male cached a small lizard in the frayed end of a tree-stump about 10m from a shrub where the female was food-begging. The male joined the female, but the female did not go to the lizard. After a few seconds the male returned to the stump, retrieved the lizard and flew over to another shrub where he was joined by the female. The male then directly fed the lizard to the begging female. Possibly, the male originally stashed the lizard for the female to retrieve, and only retrieved it himself after she failed to do so.

On 13 September 1997 HFR watched three adult Black-headed Sittellas (*Daphoenositta pileata*) (two males and a female) feeding four fledglings. One of the males, carrying insects in his beak, approached a fledgling and offered the food, then pulled it away and cached it in rough bark about 20 cm from the fledgling. The young bird aggressively displaced the adult and removed and ate the stashed food.

Assuming that the male butcherbird responded to the female food-begging in the same way that it would to a food-begging young bird, the food-caching by the butcherbird and sittella are analogous. Is it possible that these were instances of